



HIKING – FOREST SERVICE – ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine
Updated: February, 2003

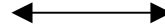
Continental Divide Trail #813 – Weminuche Pass to Hunchback Pass

Length: 20.4 miles (32.6 km.)

Use: Moderate to Heavy

Recommended Season

Spring Summer Fall Winter



Difficulty: Moderate to Hard

USGS Map (s): Rio Grande Pyramid;
Weminuche Pass

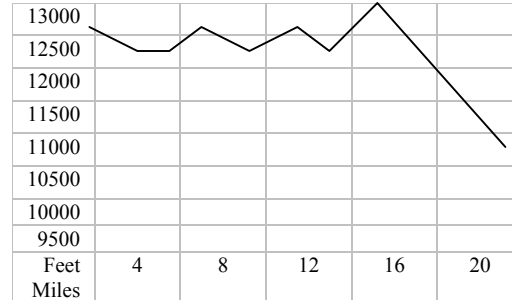
Starting Elevation: 12,500'

At Hunchback Pass, about ¾ mile
south of Kite Lake

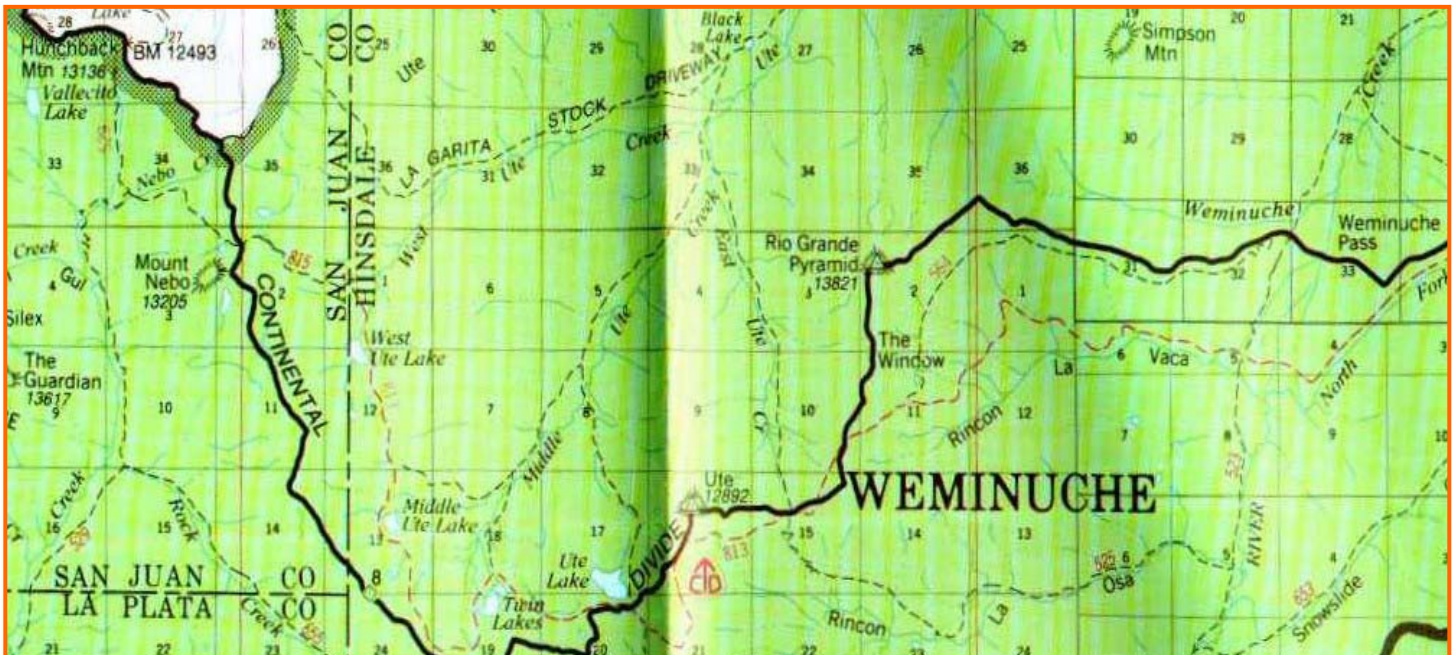
Ending Elevation: 10,600'

At Weminuche Pass, about 4 miles
South of the Rio Grande Reservoir

Recommended Season: Summer/Fall



Access: #1: Travel southwest from Creede on Colorado Highway 149 for about 20.1 miles to the junction of Highway 149 with FDR #520 (Upper Rio Grade River Road), then about 26 miles to the Beartown Road #506 junction. Proceed up the Beartown Road to ¼ mile below Kite Lake, where the Continental Divide Trail #813 crosses the road. Hike ¾ mile southwest to Hunchback Pass. A 4-wheel-drive vehicle is required for access to the Kite Lake Area.



Attractions & Considerations : Many vacation adventures await visitors to this segment of the Continental Divide Trail. Perhaps foremost is the opportunity to see and visit the towering Rio Grande Pyramid mountain peak and the adjacent “Window” area. The raw beauty and inspiring views in this area will long be etched in the visitor’s memories. The extremely rugged, ragged beauty of the Needles Mountain area of the Weminuche Wilderness can also be viewed in the distance from the trail, when traveling from Hunchback Pass to West Ute Lake.

Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map

Forest Service Maps and other publications available at the Public Lands Center in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off of Highway 160 or by calling 970-247-4874. www.sjma.org

This trail segment provides access to many fishable lakes in the Upper Vallecito and Ute Creek Drainages. West Ute, Middle Ute, Twin Ute, Ute, Rock, and Flint Lakes either adjoin the trail or are a quick side trip. “People pressures” are high from mid-July to mid-August along the Continental Divide at the head of the Vallecito and Ute Creek Drainages. This trail segment is well above timberline for all but a one- or two-mile stretch near Weminuche Pass. The best camping areas are off the trail and at or below timberline, where trees provide protection, comfort, variety, and fuel.

Narrative: The trail from Hunchback Pass begins by making a fairly steep one-mile descent into the Vallecito Drainage before making a steady climb up Nebo Creek. Approx. ½ mile up Nebo Creek, the trail will turn and pass through a flat, open meadow below the towering ragged cliffs of Mount Nebo. The trail will continue through grassy, open meadows and slopes before reaching West Ute Lake.

The trail will then switchback up the rocky slopes south of the lake, before reaching the divide between the West Ute and Middle Ute drainages. The Continental Divide Trail is very poorly defined from this divide to Twin Ute Lakes. Heavy willow growth and boggy areas make travel difficult to Middle Ute Lake. Most people follow the defined tread of the West Ute Cut-Off Trail to the Main Ute Trail below Twin Ute Lakes. They rejoin the Continental Divide Trail to the Main Ute Trail below Twin Ute Lakes. They rejoin the Continental Divide Trail at Twin Ute Lakes and proceed over hilly, open country toward Main Ute Lake.

After reaching the ridge above Main Ute Lake, the trail will shortly make a steep, winding ascent to the headwaters of the Rincon La Osa Drainage. The trail will again become poorly defined at the headwater of Rincon La Osa. Be careful not to go down the well-defined Rincon la Osa Trail unless you are looking for a good camping area in the tree-lined meadows. By staying close to the Continental Divide Trail, you will eventually pick up the well-defined trail tread heading up the steep slope below the “Window.” The trail will cross the Divide below the “Window.” Once again, hikers need to be careful not to go down the Rincon La Vaca Trail, but should bear northward across the open meadows below the “Window” and the “Rio Grande Pyramid.” Shortly, the well-defined tread of the High Line Trail will come into view. Following this trail will take one along the narrow cliffs before dropping sharply to Weminuche Pass.



Fishing Considerations: Access to many fishable lakes in the Upper Vallecito and Ute Creek Drainages is available in this trail segment. West Ute, Middle Ute, Twin Ute, Ute, Rock, and Flint Lakes either adjoin the trail or are a quick side trip. All of the Ute Lakes are rated fair for cutthroat and rainbow, except for West Ute Lake, which is rated poor for cutthroat and rainbow. Rock Lake is rated fair for cutthroat trout, and Flint Lake is rated good for cutthroat.



Weminuche Wilderness Regulations: Group size is limited to 15 people. A combination of people and livestock must not exceed 25. All livestock feed must be certified weed free. Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source unless the campsite is designated or posted. Do not leave campfires unattended. Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land. Dogs must be leashed or under voice control at all times and must not disturb people or wildlife. Shortcutting switchbacks on trails is prohibited. Disposal of human waste and gray water within 100 feet of any water source is prohibited. Trash must be packed out and properly disposed of. Cutting or damaging live trees is prohibited. **Please check trailhead signs or Forest Service Offices for site-specific camping, campfire, and livestock regulations.**